



COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

March 7, 2016

My name is Michael Criss. I am the First Selectman of Harwinton and appreciate the opportunity to testify on behalf of the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities (CCM) regarding **HB 5556, "An Act Concerning the Regional Uniform School Calendar"**

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 96% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate the opportunity to testify on bills of interest to towns and cities.

This bill would, among other things, provide local or regional boards of education with five flexible days to deviate from the uniform school calendar developed by their respective regional education service centers (RESCs). CCM appreciates the flexibility this bill attempts to provide towns and cities by allowing for five flexible days to deviate from the uniform school calendar.

However, CCM has concerns with the provisions of the bill that would require the Commissioner of the Department of Education to withhold 10% of the school transportation grant given to a local or regional school board if they fail to use the uniform school calendar. In particular, the language in lines 27-32 that would reduce transportation grants to local or regional boards of education if they deviate from the uniform calendar established by their RESC. The deficit mitigation package approved in December 2015 included a cut of \$1.0 million to the Public School Transportation Grant. If this bill were to be adopted, it could exacerbate the recent reductions to school transportation funding and likely have a negative impact on the delivery of local services.

Local officials know best that tough economic times require difficult budget choices – and have long adopted practices at the local level of doing more with less. However, the proposal would jeopardize the significant progress made over the last four years in the delivery of public education. In order for Connecticut to compete economically with its neighbors and the world, the State must, at the very least, sustain its overall financial commitment to public education.

CCM urges the Committee to either **(1) develop alternative language to ensure school transportation is maintained, or (2) take no action on HB 5556.**

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If you have any questions, please contact Daniel C. Giungi, Senior Legislative Associate for CCM, at dgiungi@ccm-ct.org or (203) 498-3023.